



## Handspring on the Edge

**Review** By Denny Atkin

Handspring surprised the market by beating Palm to the punch with a thin, expandable handheld. On March 13 the company announced the **Visor Edge**, a \$399 Palm OS handheld that features a thin, impressive design that's competitive with the Palm V series, but which maintains the capability to use Springboard expansion modules.

The basic specs of the Visor Edge are identical to those of the Visor Platinum: a 33MHz Dragonball VZ processor, 8MB of RAM, and Palm OS 3.5.2H in non-updateable ROM. On the outside, though, the design is completely new. The Edge is a mere 0.44 inches thick, and it weighs in at 4.8 oz. It's slightly taller and a bit less wide than the Palm Vx, and has a very slick, stylish metal case. The heavyweight metal stylus slides onto the right side of the unit, and a flip-open cover protects the screen when the Edge is in your pocket. The overall effect is very classy. While it looks a bit brick-like in photos, in-hand it's perhaps the most stylish Palm-powered device yet. Silver and

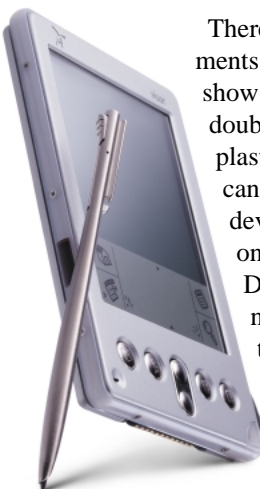
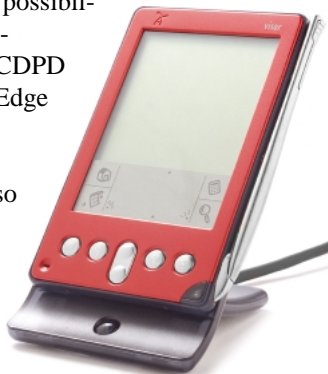


Blue versions should be available in stores in coming weeks, while the Red model can be ordered only from Handspring.

So how does such a tiny handheld accommodate the rather large Springboard modules? Through a detachable Springboard slot. Just remove the cover (having to find some-

where to put the cover is the most annoying aspect of Springboard expandability on *any* Visor, it seems) and slide the Springboard slot onto the back. This makes the top half of the Edge about as thick as a standard Visor, but allows you to use any current Springboard module. Of course, using this takes away much of the advantage of a thin handheld. However, the Edge connector that the Springboard module plugs into can directly support expansion devices, so thin, clip-on peripherals are a possibility. Tellus has already announced plans to ship a CDPD wireless modem for the Edge connector.

Alas, the HotSync connector has changed, so existing add-ons for that connector such as the Stowaway keyboard and cell phone cables will need special Visor Edge versions.



There are a few other nice improvements. The power button lights up to show charging state, and can also double as a flashing silent alarm. The plastic wraps around the case, so you can see the alarm light even when the device is off. Also, there's a new one-handed lookup mode in DateBk+ that makes finding phone numbers surprisingly easy. Finally, the Edge includes a rechargeable Lithium Ion battery.

After using the Edge for a day, we're impressed with its handy size and solid construction.

Power users who always have a memory or wireless Springboard plugged in will find the Edge stylish, but won't get a real size advantage. The device works best if you're happy with the basic unit for day-to-day use, and you carry Springboards only some of the time.

Some may wonder why you'd buy a device that uses larger Springboards when Palm has publicly stated that they'll be releasing Palm V-sized devices that use tiny thumbnail-sized SD Card expansion devices. While the SD standard holds great promise for the future, there are many Springboards shipping now. Cameras, modems, MP3 modules, the VisorPhone, and so on are shipping today and can be used with the Edge. Only memory cards are currently available for SD slots; it will be late this year before we start to see SDIO multifunction SD cards.

What don't we like about the Edge? The lack of a color model is our biggest gripe. After using the Visor Prism, we're spoiled, and we want a color display. Also, the detachable Springboard module is nice, but a bit of a kludge. We'd like to see Handspring certify the Edge connector as a sort of "Springboard 2.0" standard, so companies could create smaller-than-Springboard devices for it and count on them working on future Visor handheld models as well.



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## News

### Black Platinum

Along with the new Visor Edge, Handspring also announced that it's shipping a **graphite** (that is, black) version of its Visor Platinum. Now hip Visor users who only wear black, or companies for whom silver is just too "on the edge," can enjoy the Plantium's improvements as well.

### Extending Palm

In another move to cement its domination in the enterprise market, Palm has acquired Extended Systems, a developer that creates systems to securely integrate corporate data with handhelds. The deal was valued at \$264 million.

### Handheld Computing on PeanutPress

Three new issues of Handheld Computing Magazine are now available at [Peanutpress](http://Peanutpress). This includes the mysterious "lost" issue 3.3, available at a special price of \$2.99, as well as issue 3.4 and our Fall/Winter 2000 Buyer's Guide.

## New Products

### IntelliGolf 5.1

Karrier Communications' IntelliGolf 5.1 golf scorecard software now sports the ability to beam scorecards to buddies in your foursome, and to wirelessly access over 10,000 Internet-based golf scorecards. It still won't do anything about those problems with your long putts, though. [www.intelligolf.com](http://www.intelligolf.com)

### Bejeweled

A licensed conversion of the online puzzle game, Bejeweled is a game where you simply try to swap pairs of gems to match lines of three or more. Warning: One of those games that's very easy to learn and amazingly addictive. [www.astraware.com](http://www.astraware.com)

### powerViewer 2000

ibrite's powerViewer 2000 is a utility that will convert your PowerPoint presentations--complete with images, bullet text and notes--into a Palm-viewable format. The latest version now supports PowerPoint 97 as well as PowerPoint 2000, for those businesses still using the older Office software. [www.ibrite.com](http://www.ibrite.com)